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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4306  
INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE  
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 4735

UNCLAS MASERU 000269

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, INR/AF, DS/IP/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [LT](#)  
SUBJECT: STAY AWAY CALLED OFF AS TALKS OPEN TODAY

REF: Maseru 266

11. (U) Tom Thabane, leader of Lesotho's largest opposition party, the All Basotho Convention (ABC), announced on August 4 that the stay away called for by a group of opposition parties had been called off. Thabane stated that the decision was made to end the general strike in order to facilitate the talks between all stakeholders in the 2007 election dispute and to allow the Independent Election Commission (IEC) a chance to respond appropriately to the opposition parties' complaints about the allocation of proportional representation seats in parliament. The governing Lesotho Congress for Democracy, the ABC, the IEC, and representatives of the other opposition parties will begin talks today in an attempt to defuse the crisis. Thabane indicated that the opposition may return to the strike or implement other measures if their grievances are not addressed.

12. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the talks had been announced to the public on August 3, Thabane did not decide to call off the stay away until August 4. It is more likely that this decision resulted from the public's lackluster participation in the strike than from a conviction to support the talks. With more people worried about losing their jobs in a depressed economic climate than about supporting the opposition, the strike was poorly timed. Post will continue to report as the talks progress.

POWER